1999-2000 (till Jan' 2000). Further attempts for improving the health of the unit including strict control on the controllable items of cost are being made. The Government of Assam has already been requested to check the inflow of coal from Meghalaya, which is being sold from the stockyard of Beltala in Guwahati city in Assam. This is seriously affecting the sale of coal produced from Margherita.

(d) and (e) Coal India Limited has already approved projects for increasing production from Lekhapani and Baragolai Mines but the work has been stalled because of dwindling market of coal and lack of sustained linkage with Steel Plants, Cement, Tea Industry and Power Plant which was expected to come up in Margherita area. Coal India Limited has already applied for fresh lease holds in Assam where coal exists and is easily extractable by open cast methods (PQ block in Dilli-Jeypore area) but Government of Assam is still to take decision on this matter. Once market improves, these areas can be exploited and coal production increase within a short time frame. Central Mine Planning & Design Institute Limited, a subsidary of Coal India Limited, is continuing exploration work in Baragolai, West of Makum Coalfields. However, the detailed geological report of this area is awaited.

Removal of sand from River Beds

707. SHRI P. SOUNDARARAJAN: Will the Minister of MINES AND MINERALS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the fact of large scale removal of sand from the river beds in the country;

(b) whether Government have studied the pros and cons of such large scale removal of sand for various purposes; and

(c) will Government regulate this trend to prevent ecological and environmental problems?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES AND MINERALS (DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERM A): (a) Ordinary sand is a minor mineral defined under Section 3(e) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, the regulation of which is done by the respective State Governments. Hence the Central Government in the Department of Mines is not concerned with the removal of ordinary sand from riverbeds in the country. Moreover, no representation regarding large scale removal of sand from riverbeds has been received in the Department of Mines.